

## Envisioning the Future of Coastal Management



Groups within and outside of the coastal management community have been discussing ways to improve the management of coastal resources for several years. Most notably, the Pew Commission and U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy drew national-level attention to these issues and made important recommendations for change. Building upon these efforts, NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS), with leadership from the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, and the Coastal States Organization (CSO) are embarking on a process to envision coastal management in its next phase of evolution and identify specific steps NOAA and the coastal states can implement to continue to promote healthy oceans and coasts.

The visioning initiative is ambitious; it focuses on the reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), through a process that is designed to solicit innovative ideas and consider substantive changes. The joint goal of the initiative for NOS and CSO is to identify core principles and specific options to be considered in their respective reauthorization proposals for the CZMA. The visioning initiative will be implemented in three phases:

**Phase I** – A discussion paper has been completed that identifies some of the current issues, constraints and opportunities in coastal management. In drafting the discussion paper, representatives from a broad spectrum of the coastal community were consulted: representatives of local governments, industry, recreational interests, and environmental research groups; state Coastal Managers; National Estuarine Research Reserve Managers; Sea Grant directors; academics; members of Congress; and staff from a variety of federal agencies. This initial scoping phase was not intended to be comprehensive, but rather identifies topics and questions to be examined more comprehensively in the following phases.

**Phase II** – Building upon the discussion paper completed in the previous phase, state coastal manager perspectives will be solicited to help further define the issues and priorities. The discussions with state managers will help evaluate opportunities to improve the CZMA; identify specific changes, goals, or approaches needed in the CZMA or other partner programs; and help identify key partners to engage in the following phase. Discussions will be held with at least one coastal manager from each coastal and Great Lakes state and territory, thirteen National Estuarine Research Reserve managers, and several other state government entities.

**Phase III** – With a clear understanding of the issues and the states' perspectives, the broader coastal community will be engaged for input on priorities, issues and opportunities to improve NOAA and state implementation of the national coastal zone management program. Similar to discussions during the first phase, a broad representation of constituents will be contacted, including state, local, national, industry, academic, recreational and non-governmental interests. Focused attention will be placed on identifying core principles for coastal management, specific changes that can be made to the Coastal Zone Management Act to promote better management decisions, and opportunities to increase linkages with coastal partners.

### Moving Forward with a Shared Vision

Based on the discussions and their outcomes, NOS and CSO will develop and evaluate the core principles, options for stronger management and partnerships, and potential legislative scenarios for moving coastal management forward under the Coastal Zone Management Act. Specific actions will depend, in part, on the scope of the issues identified and the ideas that emerge through the process.